

MISSIONARY SURVEYS

A SERIES OF PAMPHLETS DESCRIBING
THE VARIOUS MISSION FIELDS OF THE
AMERICAN BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY
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BURMA

THE BURMA MISSION

1. The Country

SOUTH of Assam and Tibet, between China and Siam on the east, and the Bay of Bengal on the west lies Burma, the largest province of British India. It equals in area, the New England and Middle States, together with Ohio and Indiana, and has a population of more than twelve millions. The country is drained by three rivers, the Irawadi, the Sittang and the Salwin, all of which flow from north to south. All these rivers are alive with craft and an enormous business is done on them. Elephants are trained to service in the lumber yards and mills, and are especially useful in getting heavy logs out of the jungle. Other common beasts of burden are the ox and the buffalo. Lions, tigers, leopards, and reptiles abound. There are flowers of surpassing beauty and fragrance, and many medicinally valuable trees. Burma's teakwood forests are among the finest in the world. Rice is the staple product, and its export constitutes a great source of revenue. It is an unfailing storehouse from which the starving peninsular people of India are fed.

2. The People

There are more than forty different racial divisions, but the short, thick-set, active Burmese comprise more than half the population. They are impulsive, full of fun, and much given to shows of all kinds. Next in number come the Shans and Karens. These were originally hill people, but many of the Karens now live in the plains. The Karens are very fond of music, and the Shans, who live in the eastern part of Burma, have a peculiar aptness for trading.

3. Religion

Buddhism

Six millions of the inhabitants of Burma are Buddhists. Pagodas crown every hill, and there are shrines and monasteries in every city. Of these the greatest and most famous is the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon. Buddhists believe neither in a personal God nor in the immortality of the soul. Through good works and the accumulation of merit they hope to attain *Nirvana*, non-existence, in which conscious being and personality are wholly lost.

Spirit Worship

Some of the tribes, notably the Karens and the Kachins are spirit worshipers. By their sacrifices they seek to appease the evil spirits who might otherwise harm them. Karen stories of creation, the fall of man, and the flood are strikingly like the Bible stories. Their ancestors, they say, had a "Book of God," and they are waiting for the whiteman to bring it to them again. These traditions make them ready listeners to the gospel.

Hinduism and Mohammedanism also have a large following in Burma. In Rangoon alone, it is said there are more than 50,000 Mohammedans.

4. Mission Work

The first American missionary

On Feb. 6, 1812, at Salem, Mass., five young men were ordained as missionaries to India under the auspices of the American Board (Congregationalist). One of them, Adoniram Judson, sailed a few days later with his wife, Ann Hasseltine. The following January news reached Boston that Judson, during the voyage, had by independent study of the New Testament been led to accept Baptist views, and had been immersed in Calcutta. In a letter to Dr. Thomas Baldwin he said, "Should there be formed a Baptist society for the support of a mission in these parts, I should be ready to consider myself their missionary." Baptists were aroused, encouraged and united. At Philadelphia on May 21, 1814, the Triennial Convention was organized which later became the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

When Judson went to Burma, it was not a British province but a land of savage tribes, hostile to all foreigners. When trouble arose with the British, the natives cast Judson and Dr. Price into prison, where they suffered intensely. Only the ceaseless care and devotion of Mrs. Judson saved their lives. In spite of all afflictions the missionaries persevered and converts began to be received. Judson's Burman Bible, completed in 1834 was so accurate that little revision has since been necessary.

Among the first converts was Ko Thah Byu, a robber chief, and later Judson's Karen servant. He became a remarkable evangelist and led many to Christ. Since then thousands of Karens have been gathered into the churches, and the work among the Karens remains today among the most successful.

Missions are also conducted among the Shans, Chins, Talains, Eurasians, Telugus, and Tamils, and now the Lahus on the Chinese border are asking that the missionaries establish stations in China and bring the Christian truths to them.

Achievement

During 104 years of mission work, marvelous changes have come in Burma, and social, political and religious forces at

work today are undermining the very foundations of heathenism. A strong evangelistic spirit pervades the churches, and leads them constantly to reach out to regions beyond. There are Christian homes of two and three generations, and Christian churches, some of which have fine buildings erected by native contributions. The Christian educational system goes from the jungle school through the theological seminary. Medical mission work has also been established, and along with education is a strong evangelizing factor. The problem of self support which has been successfully solved in some fields is being earnestly studied in all.

There are today thirty-two Baptist stations in the Burma field.

An appreciation

Rev. Julius Smith, a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, gives the following testimony to our work:

“The greatest missionary labors in Burma have been wrought by American Baptists. From Adoniram Judson until the present generation of missionaries, there has been an increasing force of faithful and heroic men and women who have devoted their lives to the redemption of Burma. It is safe to say that the work of all other societies combined would not equal that done by the Baptists.”

Burma Literature

A Lively Trip with Shwe O	Price \$.03
Burma: Missionary Surveys01
Judson Storiettes10
Missions in Burma10
Our Unfinished Task in Burma	Free
Pioneering Among the Kachins07
San Crombie Po	Free
The Arrival of Judson in Burma01
The First Convert in the Chin Hills01
The Guide Book25
The Literatures of Burma05

Catalog giving list of general literature on Burma free. Annual Report of Society free on receipt of 10 cents to cover postage.